

SUMMARY

2003 NOAA FISHERIES CONSTITUENT SESSIONS

Mid-Atlantic Region

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals are responsible for making the 2003 Constituent Sessions for the Mid-Atlantic region a success. To acknowledge the contributions of each of these individuals by name is not possible because so many people and organizations assisted in this endeavor. We especially thank the participants for sharing their views during the sessions. Without their participation, the constituent sessions would not have been successful.

We thank the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) for all their support, both financial and in-kind. It is gratifying to be part of a process in which a federal agency actively seeks its constituents' opinions on important issues. Dr. William Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, participated in each of the constituent sessions. Without his participation, the process would not have been so well received.

Finally, we thank the Pacific States Fishery Management Commission for selecting MerrellKatsouros LLP to help with the 2003 Constituent Sessions. We have learned a great deal from listening to the fisheries stakeholders and we hope that knowledge is reflected in our reports.

MERRELLKATSOUROS LLP

MerrellKatsouros LLP is a registered limited liability partnership in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Mary Hope Katsouros, Esq. and William Merrell, PhD, founded the MerrellKatsouros Partnership in June of 2002. The Partnership focuses on developing policies that balance the use and conservation of our ocean and coastal resources. The Partnership also provides public education on marine resource issues. Core competencies at MerrellKatsouros LLP include the abilities to understand complex interactions of human systems with natural systems at local, regional and national scales and to apply these understandings to the design of governance principles and management systems. MerrellKatsouros LLP personnel are recognized experts in formulating strategic approaches to issues and in designing specific solutions to critical issues by taking a vision or concept to goal statements, then to definitive objectives, and finally to performance measures.

Mary Hope Katsouros and William J. Merrell of MerrellKatsouros LLP prepared this report as part of the requirements of their Contract with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The series of reports produced under this contract reflect the views and interpretation of MerrellKatsouros LLP and not those of the National Marine Fisheries Service or the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. MerrellKatsouros LLP is solely responsible for the report and its contents.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROJECT

1.1 Origin and Description of the Project

Present-day laws, policies, and paradigms encompassing management of U.S. Marine Fisheries can be traced back to the recommendations of a 1969 report, *Our Nation and the Sea*, by the Commission on Marine Science, Engineering, and Resources (Stratton Commission). The recommendations of the Stratton Commission led to the creation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in 1970 and the transfer into this new agency of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), then the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries.

The Stratton Commission also laid the groundwork for the passage of the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. A principal feature of the Act was the creation of eight (8) regional Fishery Management Councils that represented a decentralized, participatory system with significant stakeholder involvement in fisheries conservation and allocation decisions. Over the years, the eight councils have evolved individually and exhibit significant differences with respect to policies, practices, and levels of public participation and access.

Most stakeholders believe that the present system of fishery management needs improvement, but they are unsure about the nature of the problem, the type of change required, the possible options, and how best to measure progress.

As the diverse interests of marine resource stakeholders increasingly diverge, and as the political resolve to reshape existing legal and regulatory processes grows, there is a critical need for a systematic evaluation of fisheries management and the process of public participation in that management. To generate information important to the pending reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA, P.L. 94-265), Congress and the National Marine Fisheries Service are working to better understand ways for the United States to fulfill its responsibilities in marine stewardship. Recent and ongoing evaluation efforts include: the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, Congressional hearings on Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization, and a number of Congressionally mandated studies (key works: National Academy of Public Administration, Court, Congress and Constituencies: Managing Fisheries by Default; National Academy of Science, Science and Its Role in the National Marine Fisheries Service; Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, A Perspective on the National Marine Fisheries Service: Issues and Recommendations); and National Academy of Public Administration (Kammer Report), An Independent Assessment of the Resource Requirement for the National Marine Fisheries Service.

A key recommendation of the Kammer Report is that “The (NOAA Fisheries) Assistant Administrator design and implement processes for developing and evaluating its programs and updating its policies that involve constituents and partners where these groups or individuals have expertise and/or will be affected.” This project is a response to that recommendation.

1.2 How the Project was Conducted

NOAA Fisheries, working with the Pacific States Fisheries Management Commission, contracted with MerrellKatsouros LLP to schedule a series of regional constituent sessions and to evaluate constituent’s e-mail communications. The purpose of the sessions was to gather public input on ways to improve the effectiveness of NOAA Fisheries and its management of living marine resources.

The regional sessions were a collaborative effort that involved all major marine fisheries interests. The primary objective was to assemble and analyze the diverse opinions, attitudes, and perspectives of marine resource stakeholders as they relate to the broad themes of U.S. fisheries management. A secondary objective was to identify possible performance measures.

The meetings were announced in the *Federal Register*, on the NOAA Fisheries web page, and on the web page of each of the regional Fishery Management Councils. In addition, stakeholders unable to participate at the regional sessions were encouraged to use the E-Comments pilot program to share their views. The following questions were developed to assist stakeholders:

1. What are the most important issue facing fisheries in your region?
2. Who has responsibility over this issue? If unclear or uncertain, who should be in charge?
3. Does the solution require (a) no change to the present administrative or statutory structure; (b) administrative changes, and if so what would you propose; or (c) statutory changes, and if so, what would they be?
4. How could one measure if the solution is being properly implemented and working?
5. Briefly describe the best way to keep you informed about changes within NOAA Fisheries and fisheries management?

The constituent sessions for the Mid-Atlantic region were held in conjunction with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The Council graciously arranged and announced the constituent sessions, held on August 5, 2003, in Baltimore, Maryland.

One hundred and forty-three stakeholders participated in the session. Thirty-three of the stakeholders made statements. In addition, six e-mail messages were received that commented on fisheries management in the region.

At the beginning of the each session, Dr. William Hogarth presented his views on the status of U.S. Marine Fisheries. Dr. Hogarth's presentation is summarized in Chapter 2, and a copy of his visual aids is available in Appendix 2. There was also a discussion about the region's fisheries led by Dr. Hogarth and the NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the Regional Council, the fisheries under its management, and important topics now being considered. After the presentations, the stakeholders presented their views. A summary of the stakeholders' comments is contained in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2

U.S. MARINE FISHERIES – PRESENTATION BY DR. WILLIAM HOGARTH

This chapter contains a summary of the national status of U.S. Marine Fisheries presented at the regional constituent sessions by the Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, Dr. William Hogarth. Appendix 2 contains Dr. Hogarth's slides.

The following are excerpts from Dr. Hogarth's opening remarks:

... We do have great fisheries in this country. We know that management works, and it's just a matter of working together.

... We're responsible and you're responsible for managing around 952 stocks, of those, 259 of them are considered major, and some are considered minor stocks. When we say minor, the only reason is because we look at it from a standpoint of landings, because we have to give Congress a report. Each year we give Congress a report on major and minor stocks.

Twenty species have come off the overfished list in the last five years, and 25 fish stocks have come off the overfishing list. We still have 86 overfished stocks, but about 70 of those already have rebuilding plans in place. We

implemented a schedule to have all 86 stocks with rebuilding plans no later than 2005 [two of them in 2005, the rest (84) of them will probably be in 2004)]. We added seven species last year and we took six off. So it goes back and forth when you manage a stock for conservation and use.

If you look at the commercial fishery in the U.S., we land about 9.5 billion pounds in the U.S. and we're the world's fourth largest fishing nation. These fish have value at dockside of about 3.2 billion dollars. We import about 18.5 billion dollars in fishery products and we export only 11.8. So, we have a deficit in fisheries related trade.

...U.S. Citizens consumed about 14.8 pounds per person in 2001 and last year shrimp was the number one crop in the U.S. It overtook tuna.

...We are importing between 60 and 70 percent of all the seafood we utilize in this country, and we're importing about 88 percent of all the shrimp utilized in the U.S. We import shrimp from 33 countries. We do not currently have the standards on antibiotics in this country that other countries have. We are getting quite a few shrimp imported into the U.S. and, in turn, that has really flooded the market. The imports are really becoming a problem for our fisheries and we need to look at how we can help in this effort. I think aquaculture from foreign countries is

producing very inexpensive products. A lot of money is being invested.

We don't do much in this country with aquaculture. We are in the process now of trying to determine the role of NOAA Fisheries and how we should be doing aquaculture.

...The recreational fishing industry has over 17 million people that fish. They make 65 to 70 million fishing trips per year. They land about 135,000 metric tons...

...Over 17 million Americans participated in recreational fishing in 2002, totaling over 65 million fishing trips and supporting almost 350,000 jobs with an economic impact of more than \$30 billion.

...The economic value of the commercial fishery is also around 28 to 29 billion dollars. Therefore, we're dealing with a total fishery worth close to 60 billion dollars in gross national product. If you look at management of overfished stocks and opportunities, that could be increased at least 15 to 20 percent. So, we have our work cut out for us.

We have about 349,000 jobs supported by the recreational industry. Factoring in personal incomes and related expenditures, it really gets to be very big business.

The top ranking recreational fishing state, of course, is Florida. California follows in second place. If Texas provided data, Texas would be ranked number three.

Excerpts from Dr. Hogarth's slide presentation follow:

*THE STATE OF U.S. MARINE FISHERIES IS
IMPROVING*

...The State of U.S. Marine Fisheries is improving. We have been making steady, incremental, progress in improving the nation's marine fisheries.

- *Status of Stocks: 932 federally managed stocks*
- *259 major stocks account for 99.9 percent of total landings, the rest (672) are considered minor stocks*
- *695 stocks have unknown status*
- *86 stocks still listed as overfished, but we continue our commitment to rebuilding*

LET ME TELL YOU WHY:

I think we are improving. In the last five years, we have reduced the number of stocks from both the overfished and overfishing categories:

- *Overfished – 20 removed, 7 added = +13*
- *Overfishing – 26 removed, 12 added = +14*
- *70 rebuilding plans have been adopted*

MY PRESENTATION WILL FOCUS ON:

- *Value of U.S. Marine Fisheries: Commercial statistics, Recreational Statistics, and Import/Export Statistics*
- *How the Region is Doing*
- *Challenges and Goals*

VALUE OF U.S. MARINE FISHERIES

U.S. RECREATIONAL FISHERY STATISTICS

- *Over 17 million participants*
- *Over 65 million fishing trips per year*
- *Over 135 thousand metric tons landed per year*
- *Economic impact of more than \$30 billion*

- *More than 349,000 jobs supported*

Ecosystem-based management affects the recreational industry quite a bit in that one needs to look at Marine Protected Areas or other things that may protect fish. If you look at Number 3 of my goals, where it says stabilize for maximum economic benefit, I think that recreational is part of the maximum economic benefit. The big issue in the future is the allocation between commercial and recreational because the recreational industry is growing.

MY TEN GOALS

- 1. Review National Standard 1 Guidelines*
- 2. Explore Ecosystem-based management*
- 3. Stabilize fisheries for maximum economic benefit and improve rebuilding plans*
- 4. and cooperative research with industry*
- 5. Promote U.S. seafood*
- 6. Incorporate ocean observing system*

7. *Minimize bycatch and develop new gear technology*
8. *Develop pilot projects in aquaculture*
9. *and responsiveness in management*
10. *Export gear technology internationally to help recover endangered species*

We have made great progress in management. There are a lot of success stories, but we still have a lot of work to do. We need to make sure that we take credit for what has been done and we should be dedicated to improving management.

Summer flounder is coming off the overfished list. The surfclam and ocean quahog are no longer classified as overfished. Squid and butterfish are no longer overfished. Salmon runs this year are very high.

The listing criteria for the Endangered Species list, the Jeopardy Standard, and Essential Fish Habitat are all issues that must be covered. The Council is required to designate Essential Fish Habitat for all of these 952 species for four life stages.

We need to be timelier and more responsive. I don't know if we can do anything with that before Magnuson is reauthorized, which will probably be in about a year.

We are trying to beef up our Constituent Services in NOAA Fisheries.

My [Hogarth's] job, and people might disagree with me, but the job I took is to manage these fisheries for maximum economic benefit to the country. And that means that you are going to have stocks that will be reduced to probably 50 to 60 percent of their natural levels. I feel pretty confident that cooperative research is an excellent way to make progress.

We need to do a better job of promoting seafood in the U.S. Just because a stock is overfished, does not mean it should not be utilized by the American public if a rebuilding plan is in place.

CHAPTER 3

THE MID-ATLANTIC REGION

3.1 The Council

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The MAFMC manages fisheries in federal waters off the coasts of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina and includes the state of Pennsylvania.

The Mid-Atlantic Council consists of 25 members (21 voting, four non-voting), representing State and Federal agencies and the public. The voting members are the Northeast Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, a State fisheries official from each of the eight Mid-Atlantic States, and 13 public members nominated by the State Governors and selected by the Secretary of Commerce. Each State is entitled to at least one public member, with the remaining public members appointed at-large. The public members serve three-year terms. The non-voting members represent the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Dept. of the Interior), the U.S. Coast Guard, the State Department, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries

Commission. A permanent staff, a Scientific and Statistical Committee, and an Advisory Panel are established to support and advise the Council.

Over the last several decades, the MAFMC has made remarkable strides to conserve and protect the living marine resources in federal waters off the Mid-Atlantic coast, reversing decades of overfishing for many of the stocks in the Mid-Atlantic region. The MAFMC has primary management authority for 12 species along the Atlantic coast, with two stocks listed as overfished, 8 not overfished, and the status is unknown for one stock and undefined for one stock.

The ports of Reedville, and Hampton Roads Area, Virginia are the highest producing in the Mid-Atlantic region. Reedville produced 367 million pounds of fish in 2002, while Hampton Roads Area landed the third highest dollar amount for fish in the United States at \$68 million.

In consultation with NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the MAFMC designed a research program that integrates fishing industry activities with cooperating scientific partners to improve fishery management decisions. Beginning in 2001, this program, known as the Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program, established a set-aside quota for a number of species. This set-aside amount is then available as an award to applicants who successfully compete in the Council's RSA program. Research to date has included studies that evaluate the effectiveness of escape

events in black sea bass traps, test the effectiveness of escapement panels to reduce bycatch of scup in squid nets, involve the development of a supplemental finfish survey, and investigate the effects of increasing mesh size in the summer flounder fishery.

In the Mid-Atlantic region, limited sea sampling data and data from vessel trip reports (VTR) are available to characterize the bycatch in commercial fisheries. However, the nature of the data make it difficult to develop any definitive or reliable conclusions about bycatch for these fisheries especially during the periods or in areas where sea sampling has not occurred or VTR data are limited or contradictory. Lack of data has been the primary reason why an age-based assessment has not been developed for either scup or black sea bass.

The framework adjustment procedure in the MAFMC's Fishery Management Plan (FMP) can be used to respond quickly to changes in fisheries through the implementation of new management measures or the modification of existing measures. The Council addressed the essential fish habitat (EFH) provisions of the Sustainable Fisheries Act (SFA) of 1996 in amendments to four existing FMPs.

The majority of the stocks managed by the MAFMC has experienced and/or will continue to experience declines in fishing mortality while being managed under rebuilding plans. Overall reductions in fishing mortality and fishing effort have had a positive impact on stock status and also have acted to protect EFH.

3.2 FMPs for the Region

Presently, the MAFMC is responsible for seven Fishery Management Plans.

1. Fishery Management Plan for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass

Several species including summer flounder, scup, black sea bass and bluefish are rebuilding under this FMP. The summer flounder stock has rebounded to the point that the spawning stock biomass increased over 700 percent from 1989 to 2002. The summer flounder stock is no longer overfished and overfishing is no longer occurring.

The scup stock has also responded positively to the MAFMC's management measures. Both state and federal survey indices for scup indicate a significant increase in stock abundance in recent years. Current stock status indicates that the stock is no longer overfished.

The black sea bass stock size has also increased to a record high level since the MAFMC began managing the fishery in 1996. The three-year average spawning stock biomass increased by over 300 percent from 1996 to 2002. Recent survey results indicate that the stock is no longer overfished.

2. Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Bluefish

The Council developed management measures to regulate the bluefish fishery in 1990. The stock responded positively to these management measures and, in fact, recent estimates of fishing mortality indicate that overfishing is no longer occurring.

3. Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog

Perhaps the most noteworthy of the fully rebuilt species are surfclams and ocean quahogs which are managed under a federal Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) program. In 1990, the Council implemented an ITQ management system that reduced the number of vessels in the fishery, tripled the average harvests per vessel, eliminated derby fishing, and increased profits per participant. Today, neither the surfclam nor the ocean quahog fisheries are considered overfished.

4. Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish

Atlantic mackerel, *Loligo* squid, *Illex* squid, and butterfish are not considered overfished and are undergoing rebuilding under MAFMC management.

5. Fishery Management Plan for Tilefish

Tilefish are seriously overexploited, long-lived, and strongly habitat dependent species. An FMP was recently developed for this species, incorporating aggressive management measures to rebuild this stock.

6. Fishery Management Plan for Spiny Dogfish

The MAFMC has recently developed a management program spiny dogfish. This plan, as does the tilefish FMP, includes quotas and permit requirements

7. Fishery Management Plan for Monkfish

The condition of the monkfish stocks off New England and the Mid-Atlantic coast has improved significantly over the last 3-4 years under the MAFMC's joint management program with the New England Council. More recently, NOAA Fisheries trawl surveys have enabled the agency to declare the northern stock of monkfish no longer overfished.

CHAPTER 4

ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY CONSTITUENTS

This chapter provides a summary of the issues presented by participants at the constituent sessions and provided electronically through email. The issues have been divided into national and regional topics. For this report, regional issues are issues that primarily affect the Mid-Atlantic region.

Sessions of the 2003 NOAA fisheries constituent hearings for the Mid-Atlantic region were held August 5th in Baltimore, Maryland, in conjunction with a meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Fishery Management Council. These constituent sessions had 143 attendees, 33 of whom made presentations during the sessions. Six e-mail messages were received from constituents from the Mid-Atlantic region. Sixteen national issues were identified by constituents, Mid-Atlantic region constituents commented on twelve. The sixteen topics were: aquaculture-marine; bycatch; councils; ecosystem management; economic, social and cultural issues; essential fish habitat; infrastructure – land-based; management, Magnuson Stevens Act; marine mammals; marine protected areas; NOAA leadership; overcapitalization/rationalization; Pew Oceans Commission, National Commission on Ocean Policy; recreational/commercial; regulatory streamlining; and science/data/observations. Responses to these issues are summarized below:

NATIONAL ISSUES

National issues identified by constituents either at regional sessions or electronically, by topic in alphabetical order, are:

1. **Aquaculture - Marine**

- *No comments*

2. **Bycatch, Bycatch Reduction**

- Need more observers to determine bycatch
- Need flexibility on experimental permits
- Regulations don't allow one to experiment with improved designs
- Zero Mortality Rate Goal (ZMRG) for marine mammals isn't realistic
- ZMRG is an aspiration. Need to keep it even if you can't quite reach it
- Bycatch is excessive and out of control
- Marine mammals now have religious status in the US
- As we rebuild marine mammal and sea turtle populations, we should expect more incidental take of these animals
- Fifty percent of bycatch is because of bad regulations
- Management needs to consider full retention of catch
- Bycatch is now about 21% of landings – way too high

3. **Councils**

- Can't separate conservation and allocation functions
- Should separate conservation and allocation functions

- Councils overall are composed of 49% commercial fishers, 33% recreational fishers, and 18% other. They do not represent a broad community interest in a public resource
- Many council members have an economic interest in the outcome of their votes
- Need a program of training/education for council members
- Should use advisory panel comments more wisely
- The information volume is overwhelming councils
- There should be a method so peers could kick off a bad council member
- Council member's conflicts of interest have lead to short-term economic gain instead of protection of marine ecosystems

4. Ecosystem Management

- Need to define the ecosystem one is trying to manage
- Keep the definition of ecosystem narrow
- The entire country of Australia has ecosystem-based management, why can't we?
- Dredging and bottom trawling put entire ecosystems at risk

5. Economic, Social and Cultural Issues

- We have managed fisheries, but not the marketplace
- A constant domestic supply would reduce imports and improve trade balance
- Recreational fisheries generate much more economic benefit per pound of fish
- Commercial fisheries provide the consumer with a low-cost quality product
- Economic impact of party boats, head boats is missed or underestimated

- Fisheries management undervalues the traditional ‘short trip’ community. They provide a fresh, high quality product compared to ‘long trippers’.
- Movies like *Finding Nemo* intentionally give the impression that fish are friends, not food

6. **Essential Fish Habitat**

- NOAA’s approach to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) is well beyond the intention of Congress in the Magnuson-Stevens Act
- Need new, stronger laws to protect habitat

7. **Infrastructure – Land-based**

- *No comments*

8. **Marine Mammals**

- *No comments*

9. **Management, Magnuson-Stevens Act**

- Managers don’t consider the value of nature when they manage fisheries
- Need better management of slow growing species –such as sharks
- Limiting days-at-sea is a bad way to manage marine fisheries
- Need to get latent permits out of the system
- Allocations should be over a longer period - three years - so fishermen can better plan
- NOAA Fisheries refers to any depletion of resource as “overfished”, but often it is not overfishing that has caused the resource to be depleted

- Apparent rebounds in abundance often depend on the baseline selected. The recent depletions in stocks were from already depleted historic baselines
- What is a reasonable baseline? We aren't going to bring Buffalo back to historical highs. Why do it for fish?
- Attorneys in Washington, DC cause too many problems
- Coral reefs and horseshoe crabs need to be managed better
- Certain gear types should be banned from fishing
- Need to keep a constant supply of product to the market; closures force customers to go to other suppliers
- Should not attempt to separate conservation and allocation functions in the councils
- Need to separate conservation and allocation functions with the councils handling allocation only.
- Need to reduce the catch of commercial fishers
- Commercial quotas should only be allocated to fulltime fishers, not people with other incomes
- The councils and state fishery commissions should have the same people on them
- NOAA Fisheries and the councils have failed to implement the Sustainable Fisheries Act – stocks are still overfished and rebuilding plans are not in place
- Over one third of the stocks that we know the status of are overfished

10. Marine Protected Areas

- NOAA needs to provide benthic maps for the Atlantic like it has done for the Pacific and North Pacific.

11. NOAA Leadership

- Bill Hogarth is the best man for the job of NOAA Fisheries Director
- NOAA Fisheries is much more open now
- Agency needs to work more with recreational fishers
- When will you use preemptive authority?
- NOAA Fisheries' authorization should deal with marine mammals, not the Department of Defense's
- NOAA Fisheries is taking the initiative in looking at National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) issues
- NOAA Fisheries needs to re-evaluate its role of managing for economic return from fisheries to stabilization of the resource
- Don't allow fishing first and then try to fix it. Manage fishing from the start
- NOAA should be doing all it can to stop overfishing, seafloor habitat destruction, and bycatch

12. Overcapitalization/Rationalization

- Need a clearer definition of fishing capacity – the right concept is fishing power
- If commercial fishers need to reduce capacity, shouldn't recreational fishers do the same?

13. Pew Oceans Commission, National Commission on Ocean Policy

- The idea of White House-level ocean council is a good one
- The environmentalists have too big a say in the media

14. Recreational/Commercial

- *No comments*

15. Regulatory Streamlining

- May be helping NOAA Fisheries, but putting more burdens on councils
- Process is working but becoming unworkable due to publication of many thousand-page documents

16. Science/Data/Observations

- Observer coverage needs to be increased
- NOAA scientists are working with industry to solve problems
- The culture at fishery science centers has improved
- Marine recreational fishing surveys need improvement
- Should combine Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and fisheries observers
- Misapplication of science has plagued fisheries management
- Scientists refuse to look at applying natural cycles in fisheries to fisheries management
- Science on controlling predators needs to be worked on
- NOAA Fisheries science on sharks is some of the best in the world
- We simply do not know the status of too many fish stocks
- The government is responsible for managing fisheries but doesn't know the status of 75% of the populations it is trying to manage

Regional Issues

Topics identified by the constituents, specific to the Mid-Atlantic, are the following:

- Commission/Council are out of sync about spiny dogfish
- Spiny dogfish are viscous predators that eat juveniles of valuable species
- Might need to fish down spiny dogfish to help cod recover
- The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has a much less bureaucratic process than the councils are mandated to use
- Need to work on the definition of harassment in MMPA
- Fishers for underutilized pelagic species, such as herring, need economies of large fishing vessels – Congress is not allowing that to happen
- Low populations of menhaden in Chesapeake Bay are hurting the ecosystem. They are filter feeders that help cleanse the Bay and serve as forage fish. This issue does not show up when looking at total menhaden populations, which are fine on the East Coast
- Continued dredging for fossil oyster shell is affecting striped bass spawning grounds
- Declining horseshoe crab populations are harming migratory shorebirds, redknobs in particular
- The environmental community is delaying the rotating closure management of scallops
- The industry just wants to open areas for scallop fishing, but not close any
- The scallop catch could be 4 to 5 times larger if predators were controlled
- Recreational fishers are running amok, catching summer flounder

- Do not open the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to commercial fishing of stripped bass
- Recreational fishers can catch summer flounder, but essentially can't keep any because of the 17-inch size limit
-